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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Note to editors: The following is a "My Turn" column by Attorney General Terry Goddard.

(August 17, 2006) While the thermometer still shows summertime temperatures, Arizona students are headed back to the classroom. The start of a new semester brings them to the Internet for school work as well as social interaction. Besides helping with homework, the Internet gives young people a convenient way to connect with friends and share their videos, pictures and songs with others. The Web serves as a creative outlet that broadens their world and stretches their imagination.

While the Internet is an invaluable resource, we must teach our children to use it wisely. When young people use online networks like myspace.com or facebook.com, many have a sense that only their friends, and maybe their parents, have access to their personal Web sites. The reality is that everyone on the Web has access, and some adults use these sites to exploit children.

My office has developed a brochure called "Do you know what your child is doing online? A Guide to Internet Safety for Parents and Educators." This guide and accompanying video provide parents and teachers with a wealth of information about how to protect children from the dangers lurking in the dark corners of the Internet. The brochure and video are available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.azag.gov.

The guide provides information on subjects such as cyberstalking, cyberbullying and warning signs parents should watch out for regarding blogs and chat rooms. This brochure also lists resources for parents and teachers who would like more information about Internet safety.

My office has staff members available to make Internet Safety presentations to school groups, church groups or community organizations. Contact the Community Services Program office at 602.542.2123 (1.866.358.6661 outside Maricopa County) or at communityservices@azag.gov to schedule a presentation.

You can help further by not only talking with your children, but also setting up Internet house rules. Here are some to consider:

- Keep the computer in a room shared by the family.
- Establish times your children are allowed to be on the Internet.
- Supervise your children's online activity.
- Check the computer's Internet history frequently to find out where your children have been surfing.
- Invest in child-safe software, available at electronics stores and on the Internet.
- Teach your children to never give out any personal identifying information, such as a full name, address, phone number, school or favorite hangouts.

If you are concerned about an e-mail your child received, report it to the Office of the Attorney General at www.azag.gov or to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at www.cybertipline.com.

The welfare of our children is the most important thing. By staying aware and well-informed, you can help your kids stay safe.